



GSA FTS and the United States Air Force Academy

Case Study



In 1997, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force For Acquisition and Management, Darleen Druyun, announced 11 "Lightning Bolt Initiatives," in part designed to develop superior acquisition strategies. Lightning Bolt No. 10, "Reducing Cycle Times," aimed to reduce the time from requirements definition to contract award.

The United States Air Force Academy (USFA) in Colorado Springs, Colorado, has much to brag about in their achievement of "Lightning Bolt No. 10." Their new FalconSat-2 Small Satellite (SmallSat) Program is a new, innovative, hands-on approach to Cadet Satellite Procurement.

The SmallSat Program Office provides cadets the opportunity to "learn space by doing space." Led by an interdisciplinary team of civilian and military academicians, top cadets are designing,

building and testing a nano-satellite (extremely small). This nano-satellite, dubbed FalconSat-2 is ahead of schedule to be delivered to NASA, and will be launched from the Space Shuttle Atlantis in the near future.

The small satellite program is taught and administered by the Department of Astronautical Sciences. Cadets can gain real-world experience with satellite design, assembly integration, testing and operations. Their activities mirror those of a traditional program office in almost every aspect except size.

Whether cadets become pilots, scientists, program managers, or contracting officers, many of these future officers will hold positions involved in the design and procurement of major weapons systems. The FalconSat-2 program uniquely prepares them to take on these responsibilities.





Pictured from left are key leaders on the FalconSat-2 Program Team: Air Force Lt. Col. Jerry Sellers, Director, Small Satellite Research Center; Cadet First Class Luke Sauter, Cadet Chief Engineer, FalconSat-2; Cadet First Class Jereme Estes, Cadet Program Manager, FalconSat-2; and Air Force Capt. John Martin, Director of Support and Logistics, FalconSat-2.

“The GSA FTS IT group based in Denver, Colorado (Region 8), was the perfect fit for the FS-program. In fact, this successful partnership is what has kept FS-2 on schedule and within budget to date, while meeting the required performance criteria.”

FalconSat-2 is ranked 21 of 34 essential programs by the Department of Defense Space Experiments and Review Board (SERB). The Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR) contributes funding to FalconSat because of their keen interest in the payload, which is designed to measure and record plasma depletions in the ionosphere.

Previously, the FalconSat-2 program recruited mostly senior cadets; however, this provided some training challenges because cadets had to fight a steep learning curve each academic year, while the advisors were expending valuable training resources. As a result, juniors were recently integrated into the course. This allows seniors to train

their replacements before departing, and juniors receive real on-the-job training instead of "trial by fire."

A Winning Solution

The single greatest challenge to the FalconSat-2 program office was maintaining an aggressive delivery date with NASA. This was a major driver of procurement strategy. Given unique requirements (ie., spectrum analyzers and major nano-satellite subsystem components) and a tight delivery date (less than one year), the USAFA needed a fast and reliable procurement method.

Given short lead-time, limited budget and staffing constraints, program office officials recognized the need to avoid a

lengthy, traditional source selection process.

USAFA was provided the perfect solution by GSA Federal Technology Service (FTS). The benefit of using a GSA IDIQ contract is that the program office can examine a contract offering to determine if the right mix of goods (equipment) and engineering services are available, and then send the appropriate funds, along with the requirements document, so that the acquisition process can be initiated.

Benefits of Using GSA FTS:

- Short Turnaround
- Fair Value
- Extremely Efficient
- Innovative Approach

In March 2001, the FalconSat Program Office contacted GSA FTS requesting assistance in meeting their requirements. From the start, it was obvious to the staff that this would be a success story.

The GSA FTS Region 8 IT group quickly established FS-2 as a customer in their system, reviewed and approved the statement of work, and sent requirements out "on the street" for bids. After two weeks, a proposal was received that met technical and budget expectations. In early June 2001, the FalconSat Program Office awarded a contract for the satellite subsystems and integration.

Not only was GSA FTS used for the satellite subsystem requirements, they were approached for other equipment, including spectrum analyzers and solar panels. GSA FTS quickly brought on board other qualified vendors for selection by the Program Office.

The GSA contract was an innovative way to approach acquisition for FalconSat-2. The faculty team was able to concentrate their resources (time and energy) where it was needed most – in the classroom — instructing cadets who are putting the satellite together.

A Happy, Satisfied US Air Force Academy Customer

The FalconSat-2 program continues its momentum. The team is actively working with their partners, GSA FTS and the vendor, to ensure successful delivery of the satellite components. According to the customer, "the plan is to use this 'tried and true' method of partnering with GSA for future purchases as well."



Pictured from left to right are Cadet First Class Jereme Estes, Cadet Program Manager, FalconSat-2, and Cadet First Class Luke Sauter, Cadet Chief Engineer, FalconSat-2.

"At approximately four percent of the contract award cost as a fee for service, the GSA Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract procurement method has proved to be a fair value and extremely efficient as well – and definitely in the spirit of Lightning Bolt No. 10, "Reducing Cycle Times."

Most importantly, USAFA cadets learned first-hand about acquisition and logistics excellence, and the benefits of considering an alternative strategy that will ultimately help reduce programmatic risks and raise the potential of a successful acquisition program.

John A. Martin, Captain, USAF, and Deputy for Acquisitions, Falcon-SAT,

had this to say about GSA FTS' support of the program:

"Over one year ago, our office was facing procurement challenges to order satellite subsystem components from a foreign vendor. I contacted Ms. Suzanne Schuman in your Denver Office, and she provided incredible support, which ultimately allowed us to order the components we needed. The contract is extremely efficient and Suzanne has always been there to answer any questions our office has posed. We felt the great support Suzanne and your staff provided to us warranted a personal letter – we are that pleased."

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Why You Can Trust GSA



For over 20 years, GSA FTS has been the government's expert contracting resource and strategic consultant for agencies acquiring technology solutions. We offer customers a painless path through even the most complex procurement, ensuring maximum efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Comprehensive Portfolio of IT and Network Solutions

Did you know that over 90% of federal government agencies are customers of GSA. That's because we deliver solutions. Whether you're in the market for network operations, critical infrastructure protection, enterprise architecture, legacy migration, or web connectivity, by itself or bundled, you can get it all at GSA.

It's Not Easy to be #1

Our 1400 dedicated associates consistently "walk the talk" when it comes to customer service. That's why customers continually come back to us. GSA FTS was recently ranked the government acquisition community leader in customer satisfaction as rated by J.D. Power & Associates.

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– Department of Justice,
Philadelphia, PA.

“GSA is the best one-stop shopping and contracting service available for government agencies today.”

– US Army Recruiting
Command, Fort Knox, KY

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